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R E P O R T

OF THE

Adirondack Committee,

ASSEMBLY OF 1902.

TRANSMITTED TO THE LEGISLATURE APRIL 16, 1903.

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STATE OF NEW YORK.

No. 46.

IN ASSEMBLY,

APRIL 16, 1903.

Report of the Adirondack Committee.

ASSEMBLY OF 1902.

To the Legislature of the State of New York:

The special Committee of the Assembly of 1902, appointed by resolution to visit the Adirondacks, examine the State property and report to this Assembly, beg leave to submit the following report:

The Committee met in the city of Utica, at Bagg's Hotel, July 28, 1902, and organized by electing Mr. T. M. Costello as chairman and Mr. Otto Kelsey as secretary.

The Committee started for the forest at 9 a. m., on the Adirondack railroad, stopping at the Fulton Chain of lakes. Here the State has considerable land around the lakes. The Committee visited the State Hatchery at Old Forge, and found that it was not in operation, owing to a lack of sufficient water supply of a proper temperature.

Went through the lakes to Eagle Bay. There are many dead trees along the shore of the lake that should be removed, for they mar the scenic effect and are not in harmony with the great forest that makes the background on the sides of the mountains.

Went by railroad from Eagle Bay on Fourth Lake to Raquette Lake, passing through the State Preserve. Some valuable soft and hard wood timber is on this land. Went around Raquette Lake on a small steamer. This is a beautiful sheet of water. The land around this lake is owned by the State, all of which is covered by valuable timber. It is a delightful place, with a few cottages along the water front, some of which were owned by individuals before the State purchased the land.

We would recommend that the Constitution be amended to permit the Forest Commission to lease every alternate lot on the shore of this and other lakes to reliable persons for a number of years, who would erect cottages to cost not less than \$500 or \$1,000, and to rent for not less than \$100 per year, for each lot. By this method a large income would accrue to the State from the rents received. The cottage owners would become fire wardens and would help protect the forest from fires. Every alternate lot could be occupied by campers, free from rent, who want a front on the lake.

From Raquette lake the Committee went by railroad to Tupper lake. Here we took carriages and visited the Cornell College Department of Forestry.

THE COLLEGE FOREST.

The greatest interest has been felt in a visit to and inspection by the Committee of the tract of forest land purchased

with funds provided by the State for Cornell University, which has been named the College Forest, and is being operated by the College of Forestry established in the University for the purpose of developing a scientific management of natural forests that shall supply timber for revenue, reproduce the growth, and maintain the covering of that sterile region for the protection and regulation of the waterflow, upon which vast public interests depend, while training students of the college in the practical work of forestry, and the details of successfully conducting the business of its financial side.

We deeply regret that our careful investigation of the experiment leaves us unable to approve of what has been done, and obliged to condemn both present and prospective results. The people of the State justly feel a great indebtedness to Cornell University for benefits conferred, and rejoice in its fame and influence as an institution of learning among the highest in the nation. In reporting the facts under our observation and stating our conclusions we have no desire to reflect upon the good faith of the authorities of the University for the unfortunate condition now existing, which is apparently caused by their representatives unadvisedly and too hastily assuming contract obligations whose fulfillment will defeat the purpose in which the plan originated.

By State appropriations a tract of 30,000 acres of native forest was placed at the disposal of Cornell University for the study and development of practical forestry. The land purchased is located in the Adirondack wilderness near Saranac lake. As a working capital the State furnished \$30,000 for use at the forest tract, and has annually granted \$10,000 to the college, instituted for special courses of study at Cornell. The

recipients strenuously urge that this working capital for forest operations should be increased to \$50,000, the yearly appropriation for the college at Ithaca raised to \$20,000, and that the State should also contribute suitable buildings for its purposes.

The college had about forty students a year ago, and registers seventy in the present year.

At the college forest we partially traversed the boundaries and obtained specific descriptions of the extent and character of the woods included in the conveyance to Cornell, and personally viewed the clearings made in operating under the law. We inspected the buildings and accumulated logs and products at shipping points, and examined the nurseries for propagating seedlings, as well as the limited areas where replanting is being attempted.

Approximately 1,500 acres have been denuded or cut clear during the three years of activity. The site remains strewn with brush and debris in such masses as to make the fire risk extremely hazardous, which, if once precipitated, is certain to inflict incalculable damage to holdings of the State, and likely to annihilate large property interests of private owners in the vicinity. The theory advocated is to obliterate the forest by cutting sections annually, and follow by replanting so that the new forest will produce marketable products in succession as the last portions of native trees are removed. In practice, however, the cutting must be accelerated and the planting retarded, so that even with favoring conditions this tract of forest will be extirpated in less than forty years with no chance for restoration within 100. Only about 275 acres have been replanted, and for that the outlook is discouraging.

The members of the Committee are convinced that the present method violates the original plan of operations, and

have been thought compulsory by those in charge, who executed a contract with a certain corporation in the hope of securing a market for logs and wood product enabling them to show a profit in forest culture, but which in its enforcement means destruction of the forest and bankruptcy for the plan. The contract requires the college to furnish each year about 2,500,000 feet of logs and from 8,000 to 10,000 cords of wood and other material. To strip all sizes and an immense acreage each year to satisfy this demand is unavoidable; and, with the difficulties in transportation and unforeseen contingencies, the losses will soon overreach returns in hopeless progression. As now calculated, there is an assumed, but not real, profit of twenty-five cents per 1,000 feet of logs, and twenty-nine cents per cord for wood delivered, a sum which represents, in many instances, less return for clearing an acre of woodland than a single hardwood tree ought to bring on sale. And, supplementing the inadequate price stipulated in the bond, there is the imperative necessity for taking care of the neglected rubbish, where the danger is as imminent in a draught as would be the scattering of dynamite cartridges on a city pavement crowded with moving vehicles. The estimated cost of clearing up the space now cut over is \$7,500, or five dollars per acre. The diminution of working capital progresses, and the exhaustion of any increased amount is inevitable, while the present arrangement lasts; but the profit and loss account is of slight importance, compared with the work of devastation arising from the very means adopted to preserve the forest growth.

The corporation increases its business by purchasing hardwood lands and cutting and removing therefrom everything

that will supply material for its plant, in addition to that furnished by State appropriations. The soft woods were heretofore taken by the lumbermen, and the introduction of factory plants upon a large scale, and the construction by capitalists of railroads to facilitate the handling of hardwood timber, has multiplied by many times the rate of forest removal and possibilities of conflagrations in the abandoned debris.

We believe a continuance of work on present lines will prove disastrous to the School of Forest Culture, and the injury and loss to the State irreparable. The sacrifice is upon too large a scale to justify theoretical results expected for the benefit of a third generation which may follow the present. The interests of people now living should be considered. An invaluable forest should not be cleared at heavy cost to the State for no apparent purpose but the teaching of fifty young men to provide for its promised restoration a century hence, while there are thousands of acres of denuded waste lands owned by the State upon which the doubtful experiment can be undertaken. The fluent writer and talker may offer a captivating literary exposition of the scheme to occupy leisure moments, but is refuted by a demonstrated failure in contemplated business profits, and a miscarrying in ulterior purpose through the unmistakable calamity we have witnessed to the forest. On a proposition to prevent devastation, already touching the limit of public safety, and against the continuance of which constitutional prohibition has been imposed, the people have become partners in desolating wide areas heretofore inaccessible and are responsible for waste of money and for an immeasurable damage to the Adirondack Forest Preserve that cannot be

remedied, but must be continuously suffered and deplored, unless the State shall interpose.

An unfortunate condition, growing out of this contract, lies in the fact that the price received by the university for the logs delivered at the railroad switch on the college tract is barely sufficient to offset the cost of cutting, skidding and hauling; in fact, the Committee are informed by experienced lumbermen that the contract will entail a loss to the university. If this were all, the matter would not be so bad; but there is nothing left to pay for the stumpage; and so, when the timber is cut off, neither the university nor the State receives one cent for the trees that were standing there. If, as claimed by the agent of the university, it is necessary to remove this forest entirely in order to carry on planting operations for the instruction of the students or for the substitution of a better class of timber, it would be better and cheaper to set fire to the woods and clean it off that way, thereby saving the money that is now being lost in carrying out the lumber contract. The State of New York paid \$165,000 for the 30,000 acres in the Cornell forest, a price that was based solely on the value of the land and the standing timber, as we are informed. Under the present arrangement this timber will be cut and the State will receive nothing for it, except the opportunity to replant the denuded hills, an operation which will cost much more per acre than the price paid for the land, and require seventy years or more of time.

As an excuse for the present unsatisfactory conditions the statement is made in a recent report of the Cornell Forestry College that the tract given to them by the State was a poor one, that "all the valuable soft woods had already been

removed by the lumbermen, and only hardwoods, mostly rotten, remain." Upon investigating this matter the Committee was informed that the forester of the university, after inspecting personally the several lands offered, some of which were well timbered with virgin forests, selected this particular tract.

It is also claimed by the university that the failure of their logging operations — as admitted at a hearing before the Committee — was due to a lack of appropriations from the State to carry on that work. But it would seem that when a lumberman is presented with a timber tract of 30,000 acres, free from taxes, and with it \$30,000 in cash to run his business, he ought to succeed without further help. Further appropriations in this case would merely postpone insolvency, and result eventually in a greater loss.

It is urged, also, by the Cornell officials that some of the money must be used for replanting. But this expense should be paid out of the proceeds of the stumpage; and, if the stumpage is not yielding any returns, the work should be stopped at once.

In further extenuation of the surprising methods employed at Axton, it was explained by the college officials that clean cutting or denudation was a common practice in European forests. Now, your Committee makes no claim to a knowledge of European forestry; but it is evident that where such cuttings are made abroad they are justified by the net revenue received. It is foolish to assume that a European forester would slaughter his forest without receiving a cent for his timber, as some of the Cornell foresters. If the latter were getting a fair price per thousand feet for their stumpage, and, as in Europe, could sell the limbs, tops and brush without having to clear it off at

a great expense in order to plant, the existing condition would not be so bad.

In our opinion the existing contract which requires the total destruction of from 500 to 800 acres of forest every year should be abrogated, either by mutual consent of parties, or upon the best obtainable terms, if there are no legal grounds for procuring its cancellation. The State can well afford to indemnify Cornell University against all liability when its larger and lasting interests are considered. In future negotiations the State should either have a part in the making or approval of contracts for the sale of timber products, and control the course of operations in the woods, or should promptly withdraw financial support from the college forest establishment. To protect its own property and that of citizens adjoining, we recommend a sufficient appropriation for immediately removing the brush and debris now covering the fields of recent cuttings and forming a labyrinth of combustible material where accident or criminal intent will start forest fires if allowed to remain. Neither private owners nor agents of the State should be permitted in future to create similar conditions.

We earnestly suggest, and with proper deference to the contention of those feeling qualified to speak with authority, that the work of removing old forests be stopped, and that efforts in the science of forestry be directed for a period to the management of nurseries for seedlings, and the replanting of waste places now extending over thousands of acres of State lands in the Forest Preserve. There is an opportunity for usefulness in this unlimited field where no adverse criticism need be feared, and public gratitude and honor may be won.

Leaving Axton the Committee made a trip through Upper Saranac lake, where they had an opportunity to see the large tract of State forests which covered the surrounding slopes in an unbroken area as far as the eye could reach, and which appeared to be in a satisfactory condition. Traveling through a portion of this forest, over a fine stone road recently constructed from the head of the lake to the State hatchery on the outlet of Little Clear lake, the latter place was reached and a careful inspection was made of the work carried on there by the Forest, Fish and Game Commission.

SARANAC HATCHERY.

Everything connected with this hatchery was found in perfect condition. The buildings were neat and in orderly shape, while the work carried on there gave ample evidence of intelligent management and a high degree of efficiency. By a recent improvement in the supply pipes a sufficient quantity of cold water of the proper temperature is obtained from the bottom of Little Clear lake, making it one of the best equipped institutions of its kind, and capable of a large annual output of fry, fingerlings and yearlings of various species.

REFORESTING OPERATIONS.

Continuing its journey of investigation, the Committee visited the denuded lands in Franklin county where the Forest Commission has undertaken the work of reforesting a large tract by planting small seedling trees of white pine, Scotch pine, Norway spruce and American larch or tamarack. Here were found about 700 acres of open country that had been cleared by lumbering operations and fire, which had been planted under the direction and personal supervision of the expert, pro-

fessional foresters in the employ of the Commission. The young plants looked green and thrifty, and so far as could be seen they were all alive and promising. The forester in charge stated that although a few had died the percentage of loss in this respect was remarkably small and less than that of any record kept on similar undertakings. This land is situated near the railroad which runs from Saranac village to the main line of the Adirondack division of the New York Central Railroad, and hence the plantation will always be in some danger of fire from this source. For this reason the Committee recommends that some provisions be made for the employment of patrols during the dry season to properly protect the plantation and insure the safety of the young trees which, it is confidently hoped, will in time develop a forest growth and furnish a valuable object lesson to all who are interested in the extension of our forest areas, both public and private.

From the foot of Lower Saranac lake a journey by boat was made through this beautiful sheet of water, the greater part of which, with its many islands and surrounding forests, is owned by the State. Continuing the trip, we passed out of the lake and down the river through some of the most charming scenery in the preserve to the stone dam and lock recently constructed by the State on this stream.

Below the dam there is a long stretch of still water caused by the backflow from the dam at the village, and along which the scenery is marred to a great extent by the dead timber, stumps and flood trash that in many places line the shores. A few years ago an appropriation of \$10,000 was made by the Legislature for cleaning out this unsightly mass, which was expended with good results on that part of the river near

the village; but another expenditure will be necessary to complete the work on this tourist route and improve the channel for two or three miles below the dam.

Leaving the Saranac region, the Committee went by train and stages to the St. Regis lakes; but as the State owns only a small amount of forest land in this vicinity, there was little that required attention.

From Saranac Village to Lake Placid the journey was made by rail, passing by Ray Brook, the site of the new hospital, now in course of erection by the State Tuberculosis Commission. The location seemed well adapted to the purpose of a sanitarium, and one that justified the Commission in its selection. The railroad, most of the way, passes through a tract on which the timber has been destroyed by fires that were started by sparks from the locomotives. If, when this railroad was built, the company could have been compelled to use petroleum in their engines, as done in the case of the Raquette Lake Railway, the forest would still be standing there unharmed, and a source of pleasure to every passenger on the road.

At Lake Placid the attention of the Committee was attracted by the very great number of summer visitors who filled the numerous large hotels, and thronged the smaller boarding houses and private cottages there. The same conditions had been noticed and remarked upon in the trips through the Fulton Chain, Saranac and St. Regis lakes. It required only a little thought and a brief computation to realize the immense business done in this respect, and the large revenues that must accrue to the region by this great influx of visitors, a large part of whom came from other States. The capital invested in this summer business and the revenues derived from it amount in the aggregate to millions

of dollars, and contribute materially to the development of wealth throughout Northern New York, and, incidentally, to the benefit of the entire State. Among the many reasons that are urged for the preservation and protection of the Adirondack forests, this maintenance of attractive conditions is by no means the least.

From Lake Placid the journey was made by carriages through the forests of Essex county to Keene valley, and thence to the mountainous region of the Ausable lakes, where may be found the grandest scenery in the entire Adirondacks. These lakes are situated in township 48, a large tract, which was purchased about eighteen years ago by an association of public-spirited people whose sole object was to prevent it from falling into the hands of a lumber company who intended to cut the timber on it. Since then not a tree has been cut or a deer killed on this large tract of forest land.

From St. Hubert's inn at Keene Heights, a long drive was made down the valley of the Ausable river, through the towns of Jay and Ausable Forks to the Ausable Chasm, where some time was spent in going through this famous canyon and studying the natural attractions of the place. Resuming the journey by rail, the next stay was made at Lake George. Here a trip was made through the many islands, all of which, except fourteen, belong to the State and are part of the Forest Preserve. These islands, which form one of the principal attractions in this most beautiful of all American lakes, are well wooded and give evidence of the care bestowed on them by the Forest Commission. On a few of them there are cottages which we were informed were erected several years ago, at a time when the Forest Commission was authorized to grant leases

for camp sites. But since 1895, when the new State Constitution went into effect, no cottage or building of any kind has been erected on a State island.

Leaving Lake George, the Committee returned to Albany, where it separated, subject to the call of the Chairman.

The forests of the State Preserve, so far as they came under the observation of the Committee, are in good condition and well protected from fires and trespass. Since 1899 there have been comparatively few forest fires in the Adirondack region; and these, for the most part, occurred on the outskirts of the main forest where there was no State land. The greater part of the territory burned over consisted of waste land or brier patches on which there was no standing timber or trees of any particular value. Of the total area injured by fire each year less than ten per cent. belonged to the State. In the opinion of the Committee, the fire wardens are well organized, efficient and attentive to duty, as shown by the remarkably small loss from fires, as compared with former years. The fire law of our State has been perfected by years of practical experience, and is, undoubtedly, as good a one as can be made operative under the small appropriations granted for its enforcement. It is a model law in this respect, and has been closely copied by the other States that have forests to protect. It could be made still more effective, however, by the employment of paid patrols during the dry seasons when the trees are not in full leaf, but this would require a larger annual appropriation. At present the State pays on an average about \$2,500 annually for protecting its forests—both public and private—from fire in the Adirondack and Catskill regions.

So far as the Committee could learn, there is little trespassing or timber stealing on the State Preserve, aside from the petty thieving, which, owing to the scattered location of the game protectors, is difficult to suppress entirely. Some timber cuttings, involving in all 300 acres or more, occurred during the past two years. But this cutting was done, for the most part, by parties who held deeds to the land and who disputed the State's title. In the litigation which ensued the defendants, with one exception, were defeated and forced to pay for the timber, together with an extra sum as a penalty. The exception referred to was the alleged trespass committed by the Santa Clara Lumber Company in the tract immediately south of Ampersand pond, a matter which was made the subject of an investigation by a previous committee from the Legislature. In this case, which was tried recently, the State was defeated and the title of the Lumber Company was affirmed by the court. So far as your Committee could see or learn, the Forest Commission is showing a commendable efficiency in the protection of the Forest Preserve from fire and timber thieves.

From the careful observations and investigations made, your Committee deems it proper to submit the following recommendations for the consideration of the Governor and the Legislature:

1. That the necessary legal provisions be made to enable the State to grant small leases of Adirondack land to campers and cottagers and avail itself of the large revenues obtainable from this source; that such leases should have a frontage on lakes or streams not to exceed 400 feet in length, and that the alternate sites should not be leased or sold, but should be held

for the use of the public and for individuals who should be allowed to occupy such sites free of charge, but who should be restricted in their occupancy to the use of tents.

2. That where the timber along the shores of a lake or traveled stream has been killed by the backflow of a State dam, these dead and unsightly stubs should be removed, and that reasonable appropriations be made from time to time for such purpose.

3. That the appropriations for the protection of the State forests from fire be increased so as to permit of the employment of patrols, and a more complete service in this respect.

4. That a liberal sum of money be granted annually to carry on the work of reforesting the burned or denuded lands in the Preserve and for the maintenance of the State nurseries in which forest tree seedlings can be propagated and furnished to carry on such work.

5. That in addition to the two expert foresters now in the employ of the Commission two more be provided for in the annual appropriation or supply bill, thereby increasing the number to four.

6. That in view of the large number of people who visit the Adirondacks each summer, and the immense revenue derived from this source, the necessity for protecting the great watershed of Northern New York, and the benefit derived from the climatic and sanitary functions of the forests, advantages which are dependent solely on preservation of wooded conditions, the policy of acquiring more land as an addition to the Preserve should be continued, and that purchases of forest lands in the

Adirondacks and Catskills should be promptly made whenever the property is offered at a reasonable price.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

THOMAS M. COSTELLO,

OTTO KELSEY,

JOTHAM P. ALLDS,

JAMES T. ROGERS,

GEORGE PALMER,

JOHN McKEOWN.

Dated Albany, N. Y., April 15, 1903.



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